

Columbia River Gorge oil train traffic sharply declines

By Rob Davis
The Oregonian/OregonLive, Staff
Portland — (AP) Oil train traffic through the Columbia River Gorge has declined one-third or more from its peak amid an oil price decline that has pressured crude-by-rail shipments nationwide.

A new report from BNSF Railway Co., one of the country's major crude-by-rail haulers, shows between eight and 12 trains, each a mile long, now haul oil through the gorge each week. That's down from as many as 18 each week in 2014.

Oil trains have grown less frequent throughout the Pacific Northwest as oil prices have

collapsed. Traffic dwindled earlier this year along two Oregon routes — through Central Oregon and between Portland and an oil-barging facility in Clatskanie.

A BNSF spokesman, Gus Melonas, said the railroad hasn't moved any oil trains through Central Oregon since February.

Traffic through the Columbia Gorge is significant because it's a reliable measure for how much oil is moving by rail in Oregon and Washington. The gorge is the primary route used by shippers extracting oil in North Dakota and sending it to West Coast refineries.

North Dakota is the site of an ongoing boom that has

pushed an unprecedented amount of oil onto railways nationwide, leading to a string of fiery accidents that have raised safety concerns in the United States and Canada.

The BNSF report, which was released in May by the Washington Military Department, is required to comply with an emergency federal order from May 2014.

Though federal transportation officials had said they would end those disclosures, returning a veil of secrecy to oil train movements, they recently agreed to continue them indefinitely after coming under pressure from lawmakers including U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, both Oregon Democrats.



Photo by Rob Davis, The Oregonian/OregonLive

FEWER OIL trains are rolling through Columbia River Gorge per week due to a decline in oil prices, said BNSF Railway Co. in a new report.

Washington Supreme Court: Skamania County in violation of GMA

Ruling remands lawsuit back to Clark County Superior Court

By Eric Florip
The Columbian
The state Supreme Court this week handed a victory to environmental advocates who argued that unzoned forestland in Skamania County is in violation of the Growth Management Act.

In an opinion issued Thursday, the court found that Skamania County is more than six years past its December 2008 deadline to review its natural resource land designations. The opinion largely sided with conservation groups Save Our Scenic Area and Friends of the Columbia Gorge, who had filed a lawsuit

in 2012 challenging the county's inaction.

That's not the final word, however. The Supreme Court remanded the case back to Clark County Superior Court, where the lawsuit was originally filed.

"We still will continue to pursue this case and try to establish protections on forest lands for forest uses," said Nathan Baker, staff attorney for Friends of the Columbia Gorge.

Large swaths of forestland in Skamania County are currently "unmapped" and thus vulnerable to unregulated development, advocates say. The

case centers around 15,000 acres of privately owned forestland referred to as "free-for-all" areas at one point in the court's opinion.

In 2007, Skamania County designated much of its private forestland as conservancy areas intended for the conservation and management of existing natural resources. At the same time, it declared a building moratorium on 15,000 acres of land as it considered zoning classifications there.

But the county continued extending the moratorium long after the 2008 review deadline came and went. In 2012, the county repealed the moratorium for all but 4,500 acres of the area. That's when Save Our Scenic Area and Friends of the Columbia Gorge filed the lawsuit. The

entire moratorium eventually lapsed.

Shortly after the moratorium was repealed, the county approved plans for the Whistling Ridge Energy Project, a wind farm just outside the Gorge scenic area boundary near Underwood. (A downsized version of the wind farm was later approved and upheld by the state, but never built.)

As part of its case, the county had argued that the plaintiffs' challenge was untimely and should have been filed years earlier — an argument the Supreme Court rejected. The county effectively made the "unmapped" classification permanent in 2012 when it indicated its ordinances were no longer temporary, the court said.

Skamania County Prosecuting Attorney Adam Kick said the county was disappointed by the court's opinion and is considering its options. The decision "upends several decades of precedent," Kick said, particularly in allowing the claim to be filed under the state Planning Enabling Act. The court's dissenting minority opinion echoed that sentiment.

Environmental advocates cheered the majority opinion.

"The time has come for the county to accept that it is legally obligated by state law to designate and protect forest lands for forest purposes," Tom Drach, a Save Our Scenic

Area board member and Skamania County resident, said in a released statement.

Almost 90 percent of Skamania County is either federal or state land. As a "partial planning" county, it is required by the Growth Management Act to designate and protect resource lands, including forests.

As the case returns to Clark County Superior Court, the plaintiffs will likely push for a schedule for the county to comply with the law, Baker said.

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Celilo Park closed over weekend

Celilo Park's lawn area and restroom will be closed this weekend while crews remove hazardous trees and limbs from the campsite.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said the boat ramp and portions of the day use area at Celilo Park will remain open, but park rangers will ask campers to remove all tents before Saturday.

The park is expected to fully reopen to visitors and tent campers on

Monday, June 19.

Celilo Park is a popular campsite on the south bank of the Columbia River, about 13 miles east of The Dalles at Exit 97, off Interstate 84.

For questions and concerns, call 541-506-7857. For more information about Celilo Park and other recreation areas near The Dalles Lock and Dam, visit <http://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/Locations/ColumbiaRiver/TheDalles.aspx>.

Jehovah's Witnesses convention June 19

PORTLAND, OREGON — Jehovah's Witnesses will soon hold their annual conventions at the Veteran's Memorial Coliseum Arena in Portland. The local congregations in Hood River, The Dalles, Tygh Valley, Cascade Locks, Carson, White Salmon and Goldendale have been extending personal invitations for all in the area to attend. The theme of this year's program is "Imitate Jesus!"

Stephen F. Fowler, a convention spokesman from Portland, said, "Jesus, the founder of Christianity, is widely considered as one of the most influential and significant men who ever lived. As Christians, a core belief of Jehovah's Witnesses is that Jesus lived his life as a model for us to follow. The 'Imitate Jesus!' conventions will examine Jesus' life, as outlined in the Bible, and emphasize how all — regardless of their background, lifestyle, or religion — can benefit in practical ways from his example and teachings. A highlight of the program

will be the keynote address on Friday morning, entitled 'Concealed in Him Are All the Treasures of Wisdom.'"

The extending of personal invitations has been ongoing for the last two weeks, and will reach everyone from Central Oregon, the Columbia Gorge, Southwest Washington, the North Oregon and Southern Washington Coast, and the Portland Metro area. There is no admission or parking fee to this or any event sponsored by Jehovah's Witnesses, as they are supported entirely by voluntary donations.

The first of four, three-day events to be held in Portland will begin Friday, June 19, 2015, at 9:20 a.m. An estimated 28,000 will come to the Veteran's Memorial Coliseum Arena for the Bible-based programs.

Jehovah's Witnesses in the United States and Canada are organizing 453 conventions — in 29 languages — in 124 cities. Worldwide, there are over 8,000,000 Witnesses in more than 115,000 congregations.

Radio Club field day returning June 27

Radio Amateurs of the Gorge will be turning the Walmart parking lot into a radio field day from Saturday June 27 to Sunday June 28.

The radio team will be communicating with other amateur radio operators across the United States, Canada and Mexico. The group's capacities include not only local radio and digital communications, but the ability to make contact with operators throughout the world.

Kids and parents will be able to "Get on the Air," talking with kids and adults in many lands, or even on a ship at sea. Hands-on activities will be held throughout the day Saturday. Local Scouts will have a chance to earn a Radio Merit Badge.

The field day, which starts at 11 a.m. on June 27, is open to anyone, no license required. All volunteers will be accepted for the bevy of radio opportunities available.

Skamania Introduces Taste of the Place

Make reservations today for this very special Sunday culinary series hosted by Skamania's Executive Chef, Matt Hale, as he prepares a delightful four-course dining experience using locally sourced ingredients. Served at the lodge with selections from local vintners, Skamania's "Taste of the Place" dining series is a delicious and relaxing way to start the week!

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		7		4		
				3	2	1
8			6	9		

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